

He is not a pitiful baby

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"Didn't you know the baby's disease during pregnancy? If you had known, you may not have given birth to this baby. Pitiful baby."

This is a remark of an elderly woman who was walking near us when I was still a nursery school toddler. I didn't know what happened and just looked up in the direction of the voice. Then, I understood that the elderly woman talked to my mother who was holding my little brother. My brother has congenital heart disease and had repeated surgeries and hospitalization since birth. He had to use equipment for a domiciliary oxygen therapy until he became one year old, and had to carry a large oxygen tank when going out. My mother wore a rucksack with the tank therein and held my brother in her arms when she picked me up at the nursery school. My brother ordinarily received oxygen through a nasal cannula connected to the tank. My mother made a bow to the elderly woman, who was looking down on my brother, and hurried back home while holding my hand as if escaping from her. Still now, I clearly remember that I wondered about the meaning of "pitiful baby" that the elderly woman uttered and that I was surprised to find red finger marks in my hand that had been grasped by my mother.

It was several years later that I understood the meaning of "pitiful baby." I happened to become aware of prenatal diagnosis while watching a drama titled "Kounodori (stork)." Prenatal diagnosis is used to detect fetal chromosomal abnormalities or other diseases before birth. The results may be used for the treatment after birth but may also lead to abortion. Recalling the remark of the elderly woman, I felt burning anger. I noticed that she meant that it would have been better not to give birth to the baby if he had to live while fighting with a serious disease. Is my brother's life not worth living? Is he pitiful?

I do not think so. I have another little brother, and they are both my precious brothers, irrespective of having a disease or not. Every day, we are making a fuss, often getting angry, crying and laughing. My brother is enjoying life and is never pitiful. Therefore, even if that woman meant no offense, I strongly felt that she should understand that her remark was a terrible one that denied my brother's life that had come into this world and

deeply hurt not only my brother but all my family members.

I think that there are actually many people who feel pity for those having aspects different from them. For example, I am left-handed, but I have often heard people say, "Don't you need to correct yourself to be right-handed?" or "Don't you feel inconvenient being left-handed?" As I have been left-handed as long as I remember, I have never had any inconvenience. However, I felt uneasy as if I had been labeled as being pitiful as I am left-handed among the right-handed majority. Hand dominance and diseases are part of oneself since birth and constitute one's personality, I think. Personality is an individual's attraction. If all people were the same, it would be meaningless. My brother still needs to be careful about infection and has many restrictions and constraints, but seems to be always enjoying what he can do. As he is always smiling, people naturally gather around him. I am rather jealous about his attractiveness.

I have learned about diversity at the elementary school and the junior high school. Living a life while accepting diversity does not mean to compare others with oneself and have pity on others who have aspects different from one's own, nor is it that one is unhappy unless they are the same as others. I came to think that what is important is to see things from the viewpoints of others.

To accept diversity is to respect individuals' ways of life, not to see others from above or from below nor to compare others with oneself. To accept diversity means to accept others as they are and to live every day together, I think. First of all, how much time is required for overcoming what one is bad at varies by individual. I cannot tell how many months my brother spent for practicing holding a pencil. As a result of repeated surgeries, he became unable to put power in his fingertips. Nevertheless, he practiced every day, and now he can hold a pencil and write letters. That is all that matters. We do not need to make a comparison with others.

Instead of considering it unavoidable that someone cannot do something or doing it in lieu of that person, others quietly watch over that person's challenge and praise their success straightforwardly. If a society is like that, all people will be happy. Then, people will never have an idea or make a remark that someone else is pitiful, and all will be able to live a life as they wish with pride at their own pace. Aiming to achieve such a society, I will live with my brother always with smile.